The background of the cover is a vibrant red-to-orange gradient. It is decorated with various starburst and geometric patterns in shades of yellow and white. At the top, there are several large, stylized starburst designs. Scattered throughout the background are smaller, five-pointed white stars. The text 'st JOHN'S' is prominently displayed in the upper center, with 'st' in a lowercase, cursive font and 'JOHN'S' in a bold, uppercase, serif font. A small cross is positioned above the letter 'S'. Below the main title, the tagline 'Living God's Love' is written in a smaller, italicized serif font.

st JOHN'S
Living God's Love

Parish Magazine
CHRISTMAS 2020

st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

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ADDRESS

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Our magazine is published four times a year and is delivered free to all homes and businesses in the parish.

We are very grateful to those who write contributions and the many volunteers who distribute and deliver the magazines, come rain or shine, to everyone in the parish.

We welcome advertisements and are delighted to be able to provide full colour.

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Sophie Crowley
magazine@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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Introductory Letter

As I write this – in October, in order to meet our publication deadline – the nation, indeed the world, is still in the throes of a serious pandemic. We do not know what Christmas will look like. Will we be able to celebrate with family and friends? Will we be singing carols? Will anything feel like Christmas?

It is clear that Christmas will be different this year. And yet...

And yet part of the whole point of Christmas is that each year, “come hell or high water” as my grandmother used to say, it comes. We know the story of the soldiers in World War I who downed weapons and sang “Silent Night”, voices harmonising across the cold night sky. In spite of a bitterly fought war, Christmas came. And at the risk of sounding trite, we know the story of the Grinch Who Stole Christmas... but didn't, because Christmas isn't about decorations and food. “The Grinch thought of something he hadn't before...’Maybe Christmas, he thought, ‘doesn't’ come from a store. Maybe Christmas... perhaps... means a little bit more!’”

I love Christmas. I know that this year there may be some sadness, as we look back over a year of losses, sorrows, missed events and missed people, and confusing changes to just about every aspect of living. And yet... Christmas will come this year just as it has done every year since Jesus Christ was born in that dark stable in Bethlehem. Talk about plans gone awry! Mary could not have imagined that she would find herself an unwed mother in a strange new place, far away from her mother or friends. Joseph could not have imagined that he would find himself yoked to Mary and a new baby and without a job or home. Shepherds and wisemen could not have imagined that they would be following angels and stars to that stable. Despite all obstacles, the baby came. Despite all expectations, God came down to earth in the form of a newborn infant. Despite all of humanity's inhumanity, love came down.

Christmas will come this year. God's love will be made manifest. This is not dependent on Christmas dinners, parties or even carol singing. It does not depend on our festive cheer. Christmas will come in spite of a global pandemic. God's love is as real today as it always has been. Christmas is an annual reminder that God's love takes on our humanity, has become flesh, and is eternal. This was true 2000 years ago and is just as true today.

From all at St John's, good wishes for a happy Christmas.

*Lauryn Awbrey
Reader, St John's Harpenden*



Churchwardens' Report

As we write this, it is the 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' (John Keats), a time to lament the summer and prepare for the winter. We are enjoying the late golden sun and the beautiful colours; the cold clear night skies show off the bright stars and planets, before the grey, the bleak, the dark, set in. Yet, there is no cause for despair as the cold season also has warmth and light, albeit in a different form.

Autumn began with the return of youngsters to schools, colleges, and universities, to take up and continue, their Covid-interrupted studies. We held a short service at the beginning of September to bless them all in their endeavours, pray for their success, and the effectiveness of their essential equipment, but most of all for their supportive friendships and new beginnings at these important stages of life.

The significance of Harvest was explored initially through the three weeks of Creationtide, when trees, land and rivers were a focus. In its widest sense, it became the focus at the beginning of October; the harvest of food was extended to include that of our monetary support for the church with the Grace through Giving Campaign, ably led by David Nye and the Finance Committee.

The abundance of fruit on garden trees was converted into delicious jam by Jill and Keith Slinn, and Beth and Arnold Allen, who sold their plethora of pots for Project Phoenix, our fund for re-building the church hall. Thanks to them and their harvest.

Our Harvest services: a special one

for children, and a later one for everyone, involved the collection of gifts of food for the local foodbank. Thanks to everyone for these.

Our church is open every day for private prayer (Monday to Friday until 4pm). We are fortunate to have a talented team of florists who have made it look more welcoming through their beautiful displays. We also thank the dedicated cleaners, and especially those cleaning daily which enables the safe opening of the church.

The Eco-Church Group is now under the aegis of Margaret Charlston, who will continue to ensure we follow ethical environmental practices and provide practical suggestions for us to follow in order that we may steward the earth's wonderful resources with more care and attention.

As you are all aware, James Brown, our Curate, departed from St John's for All Saints on 20th September, after his last service. He contributed greatly to our church in his three years here. We could not give him a traditional St John's send-off, but that is merely postponed until such times as it is possible. We did give him a card (more like a booklet!) containing the kind words and good wishes of everyone; he also bought a ukulele with part of the gift collected for him, and still has more for something else when he has been able to think about it during this busy time when he is moving house, as well as preparing for his new position.

Our church will continue at present with the live-streamed Sunday morning services on our YouTube channel at 9.30am. We also have a programme

of services every Sunday in church too. Junior Church have story videos online, and have also planned a once a month, very short service, on seasonal themes in church. Please check our website for details as this is the best way to be sure of times and dates. Enormous thanks to our wonderful ministry team for their hard work and creativity in keeping our services watchable, interesting, and uplifting, which we all particularly need at this difficult time.

The APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting) took place on the 11th October online. This was due to take place in April, but the pandemic intervened. At this meeting, a variety of reports were given, and votes took place. A rounded picture of our church organisation was provided so that all may know what happened in the past year, and our aims for the future. There will be more about this in our next report.

November is the time for remembrance: at the very beginning of the month are All Saints and All Souls Days when our prayers for those who have died are particularly focused upon individuals; following on, comes the appreciation of all those who have died in conflicts in the service of our country,

and whose tremendous efforts and sacrifices have enabled us to live in peace. The pandemic has made bereavement, loss, and remembrance of the dead more poignant than usual and encouraged a deeper reflection upon life too.

We are looking forward to Christmas, the celebration of Jesus's birth, even though it may not look like a 'normal Christmas'. Yet, what is a 'normal Christmas'? The senior members of our congregation may remember Christmases past when conflict and austerity impacted upon that season. However grim it may have seemed, there surely were moments of happiness; it passed, and it serves to evoke a greater appreciation of the good things in our Christian lives. In time, younger people will also look back in the same positive reflective spirit.

To read about our Advent and Christmas services coming up, head to the middle of the magazine for a detailed list.

St John's has many marvellous volunteers and we heartily thank every one of you. •

James Hillman

Jane Donati

Churchwardens



“AND IS IT TRUE?”



Despite the challenges of Coronavirus, the foundation of Christmas being the birth of Jesus remains at the forefront of our minds as Christians. At the time, over 2000 years ago, only a few people recognised the significance of this special event.

At Christmas we follow in the footsteps of those shepherds who listened and responded to the angels' message, and the wise men who followed the star that led them to Bethlehem. They saw with their own eyes what we can only read about in the gospels, and they went away rejoicing. We too can rejoice, if we believe that what they heard and saw, and what we now read, is true.

In his poem “Christmas”, written in 1954, John Betjeman asks the question: “And is it true?”

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
 The Tortoise stove is lit again
 And lamp-oil light across the night
 Has caught the streaks of winter rain
 In many a stained-glass window sheen
 From Crimson Lake to Hooker's Green.



The holly in the windy hedge
 And round the Manor House the yew
 Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
 The altar, font and arch and pew,
 So that the villagers can say
 “The church looks nice” on Christmas Day.



Provincial public houses blaze
 And Corporation tramcars clang,
 On lighted tenements I gaze
 Where paper decorations hang,
 And bunting in the red Town Hall
 Says “Merry Christmas to you all.”



And London shops on Christmas Eve
 Are strung with silver bells and flowers
 As hurrying clerks the City leave
 To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
 And marbled clouds go scudding by
 The many steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
 And oafish louts remember Mum,
 And sleepless children's hearts are glad,
 And Christmas-morning bells say "Come!"
 Even to shining ones who dwell
 Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.



And is it true? And is it true,
 This most tremendous tale of all,
 Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
 A Baby in an ox's stall?
 The Maker of the stars and sea
 Become a Child on earth for me?



And is it true? For if it is,
 No loving fingers tying strings
 Around those tissueed fripperies,
 The sweet and silly Christmas things,
 Bath salts and inexpensive scent
 And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
 No carolling in frosty air,
 Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
 Can with this single Truth compare –
 That God was Man in Palestine
 And lives to-day in Bread and Wine.



Betjeman, J. (1958) *John Betjeman Collected Poems*. London: John Murray Publishers

So whatever your circumstances and wherever you'll find yourself this Christmas Day, may you know peace, joy and a sense of wonder in that special place in your heart, as you remember and rejoice at the birth of that tiny baby in Bethlehem, the Word made flesh to save each one of us!

Anne Edwards

(Can I suggest that you take the time to read the poem aloud, and savour the rhythm and music of it?)

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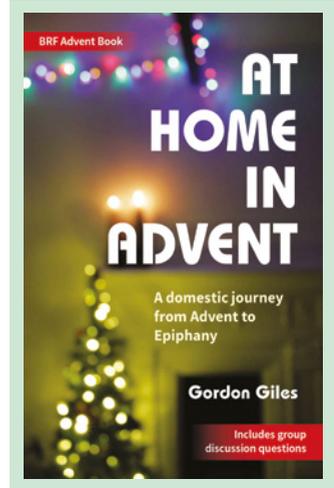
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ADVENT 2020: “Welcome to an Advent journey that goes nowhere but takes us everywhere and, and through it all, stays at home!”

Advent is not simply the run up to Christmas. We look forward to a Christmas which will have a special meaning after this strange year, and ongoing fears about what the future holds for our health and our wealth.

As we enter winter months, social distancing and isolation can feel like a prison sentence and can be physically, spiritually, psychologically and emotionally challenging. So, it is helpful to have a companion on our journey, to share the experience and to provoke ideas and thoughts. **At Home in Advent** can be your companion on the Advent Journey. Published by BRF, written by Gordon Giles, and recommended by the Ministry Team, the book takes us on a daily journey, provoking us to think about our own journey as we travel into Advent, through Christmas to Epiphany.

The book reflects on the significance of everyday objects and experi-



ences, such as traffic lights, chocolate, coffee, a Christmas advert. It picks up on the Advent themes of hope, expectation, fears, leading us beyond the domestic to questions about our planet, our choices, and our community.

This year's Christmas will be very different but let us embrace it together.

ADVENT DISCUSSION GROUP: Mondays 8 pm via ZOOM

7th, 14th, 21st December

We will meet via Zoom to talk through our reading of “At Home in Advent”. Bring a glass of wine (or not!), get to a computer near you and join with others for a chance to reflect together on our Advent journey. Hosted by Lauryn Awbrey.

Email Lauryn for details to join the Zoom Advent Discussion Group.

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“The People who walked in Darkness have seen a great Light.” (Isa 9:2)



We are probably programmed from birth to be afraid of the dark. It's a fear that begins to manifest itself as we mature from babies into toddlers and we increasingly depend upon light to find our own way to food and the reassurance and security of loving arms. When we cannot see what lurks in the shadows, our imaginations tend to run amok and fear can overwhelm us with a sense of hopelessness and distress. The dark of night often exacerbates the cares and worries that the light of day manages to deal with calmly.

Fear of the dark is primordial too and reflects a real vulnerability. When the sun was the only source of light

and days were short, the time to hunt for food was reduced and basic survival was much more challenging. The mid-winter darkness that our ancestors had to endure was all-enveloping, vast and seemingly endless.

Darkness, however dominating and powerful it may feel, has always been confined within limits. It does not have free reign to overwhelm us. From the very first creative act, described in the first chapter of Genesis, God decreed that restraints should be imposed upon it. The light of the sun and the stars were created to rule over the darkness and to limit the darkness of night.

Writing in the Guardian recently, Gaby Hinsliff articulated a fear which

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living with the Covid 19 pandemic has given birth to, a worry that Christmas might somehow be cancelled,

“I don’t want Christmas to be cancelled, but I admit that it’s not about Christmas really. It’s about not wanting the darkness to swallow us up.”

She voices a widespread fear that, without the joy of Christmas, the physical darkness of midwinter will be compounded by the mental darkness of depression – and underlying her statement is a belief that the light of Christmas can be cancelled. To those who cry, “Oh yes it can”, we need to respond more loudly, “Oh no it can’t”.

The current restrictions of the pandemic may of necessity curtail some of our traditional festivities this year, our meals will be with fewer people, we won't be able to sing carols or spend long evenings merry-making in our pubs and restaurants, but we can certainly continue to celebrate the coming of the Light into our world. So, if Christmas can still be celebrated then will there be

still be a darkness for us to fear, that may “swallow us up”? In the modern world, where we can replicate daylight at any moment by the flick of a switch, the physical darkness is not what is at issue; it is the spiritual or mental darkness of our minds and spirits, our fears and anxieties, which are just as real and all-consuming as they were for our solar-dependent ancestors. Gaby Hinsliff recognises that Christmas 2020 amid Covid 19 restrictions does indeed represent a challenge for us all – can we still see the light through the darkness?

Trying to live as followers of Christ is not the guarantee of a ticket to constant and unassailable happiness. We all have spiritual darkness within ourselves that we have to contend with and painfully work through: loneliness, fear of failure, lack of direction and self-confidence may assault us. Many of these issues have been compounded by the social restrictions of the pandemic and its wider ramifications. Faith is not a magic wand that can erase the vast array of unavoidable human emotions



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but it will help to guide us through the darkness,

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Ps 119:105)

If we allow God into our lives, if we draw close to him through our times of darkness and let the Holy Spirit guide us, the light of Christ can shine on us and through us as a beacon to others, even during challenging times of personal unhappiness or disquiet.

Darkness is a part of our lives and though it can represent a wilderness of uncertainty and fear it is not completely barren, it is also a time for rest and growth. Think of the spring bulbs resting beneath the soil preparing to flower in the spring, the darkness of the womb which gives birth to new life, the darkness of our mental struggles which enable us to recalibrate our lives, the darkness of the tomb from which our Lord arose into the light of the resurrection. Darkness gives birth to light, even the longest night will give way to the light of dawn, just as winter will be followed by spring. We must trust that there will be an end to this pandemic and that our lives will be reshaped, our

equilibrium renewed.

It is in the darkest nights that we see the stars most clearly and that is how we navigate. By their distant light, the shepherds and the magi were guided to the stable in Bethlehem and they will guide us too. Christmas this year cannot be cancelled whatever restrictions are imposed on us and we can continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus who is the light of the world

"...the true light which enlightens everyone." (John 1:9)

The darkness will not swallow us up. We are God's people and we are walking forward to a time when darkness will be permanently rolled back and everlasting light will shine upon us and the whole of creation,

"The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb...and there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light...."
(Rev. 21:23, 22:5)

Emma Bresslaw

Parish registers

Baptisms

Welcome to the family of God

There were no baptisms in this period

Marriages

Joined by God

There were no weddings in this period

Funerals

May they rest in peace

8 October 2020

Barry George Williams

Advent and Christmas Services 2020

Please note the services listed below and their times may have to be changed and / or cancelled depending on Government regulations. Our regular 9.30am service on a Sunday will continue to be live-streamed on our YouTube channel. Please visit our website at www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk and our latest newsletter for up to date information on our services each week.



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Sunday 29 November
9.30am

Advent Sunday
Parish Eucharist

Sunday 6 December
9.30am
4.00pm

Advent 2
Parish Eucharist
Faith & Light

Monday 7 December
8.00pm

(by Zoom – see weekly email for joining details) Tutored discussion on “At home in Advent”

Sunday 13 December
9.30am

Advent 3
Parish Eucharist

Monday 14 December
8.00pm

(by Zoom – see weekly email for joining details) Tutored discussion on “At home in Advent”

Sunday 20 December
9.30am
5.00pm

Advent 4
Parish Eucharist
A service of lessons and carols by candlelight

Monday 21 December
8.00pm

(by Zoom – see weekly email for joining details) Tutored discussion on “At home in Advent”

Thursday 24 December
3.00pm

Crib service*

Friday 25 December
9.30am

Christmas Day Parish Communion *

Sunday 27 December
9.30am

Christmas 1
Parish Eucharist

Sunday 3 January 2021
9.30am
4.00pm

Christmas 2
Parish Eucharist
Faith & Light

Sunday 10 January
9.30am
4.00pm

Epiphany
Parish Eucharist
Meeting the Wise men*

Christmas Trivia Quiz - around the world

- 1** In which country do they close the streets on Christmas morning so people can roller skate to church?



- 2** Kentucky Fried Chicken is the traditional Christmas day feast in which country?
- 3** From which continent did the turkey originate?
- 4** Stollen is a traditional Christmas food from which country?
- 5** Since the 1960s, the people of which country have traditionally spent the afternoon of Christmas Day watching a Donald Duck film?
- 6** In which modern-day country was Saint Nicholas born?
- 7** Which country presents Britain with a gift of a Christmas tree every year?
- 8** Christmas Island is found in which ocean?
- 9** Which cake-like bread originating in Milan in the 1500s is traditionally eaten at Christmas in Italy?
- 10** In which country are children's shoes filled with treats on December 5th?

- 11** In what region of France is it a tradition to eat 13 desserts, representing Jesus and his 12 disciples?
- 12** Which Italian town is famous for its creative nativity scenes featuring contemporary characters and household objects, as well as the traditional characters from the bible?
- 13** Where is it a tradition to build a large Yule Goat out of straw and red ribbons?



- 14** In Norway, what household objects are hidden away on Christmas Eve to stop witches from stealing them?
- 15** In which country do families share *oplatek* (an unleavened religious wafer) before the meal on Christmas Eve?



- 16** The Belgian *cougnot* is a brioche-type bread baked in the form of whom?
- 17** In which country do children re-enact the journey of Mary and Joseph looking for a room, (called the Posada procession)?



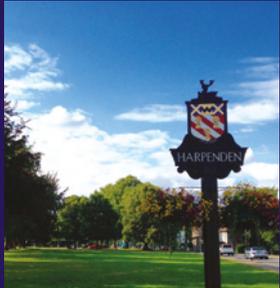
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- 18** Spiders' webs are a traditional Christmas Tree decoration in which country?
- 19** In Iceland, which animal roams the countryside looking to devour people who don't have new clothes at Christmas?
- 20** In which country do children receive presents from an old lady called La Befana on January 5th as well as on Christmas Eve?
- 21** In which country do children get rewarded for finding a pickled gherkin on the Christmas Tree?



- 22** In which country do families have a sauna together on Christmas Eve?
- 23** Which country hosts the Giant Lantern Festival on the Saturday before Christmas Eve?
- 24** Fried caterpillars (specifically the Pine Tree Emperor Moth caterpillar) are eaten as a Christmas treat in which country?



Head through to page 33 for the answers.





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St Luke's Cell prayer group

Would you like us to pray for you?

We pray for anyone in the parish who has asked for our prayers for themselves or for their loved ones. St Luke's Cell prayer group is named after the disciple and physician Luke, who is the patron saint of doctors. We are continuing to pray individually as a group during the current situation and include members from St John's and Southdown Methodist churches.

If you would like us to pray for you or someone else, then please be in contact with Michael Hughes 01582 765576



Loving God, because we trust you, we come to you with our concerns. When illness or injury cause us disruption, uncertainty and the prospect of long-term change; when we find our lives spinning out of control; give us the knowledge of your total loving and unchanging presence, so that in all the changes and troubles of this life we may be assured of your everlasting protection. Amen

(by Susan Sayers, in *Prayers for Healing*, published by Kevin Mayhew Ltd, 2013)

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Diocese of St. Albans

Is it just me or is the television news deliberately depressing these days? After a happy day of shopping in the village, meeting five friends for coffee, tending to the tubs of colourful and still thriving plants and flowers in my patio garden and playing Trickster Bridge with friends, I relax in front of the television with a cup of tea or a glass of wine and am hammered with news after negative news, given dire warnings of what will happen if I do the wrong thing and told there is some hope for next year but no guarantee.

I now switch off the television after hearing the headlines and turn to poetry books to keep me positive.

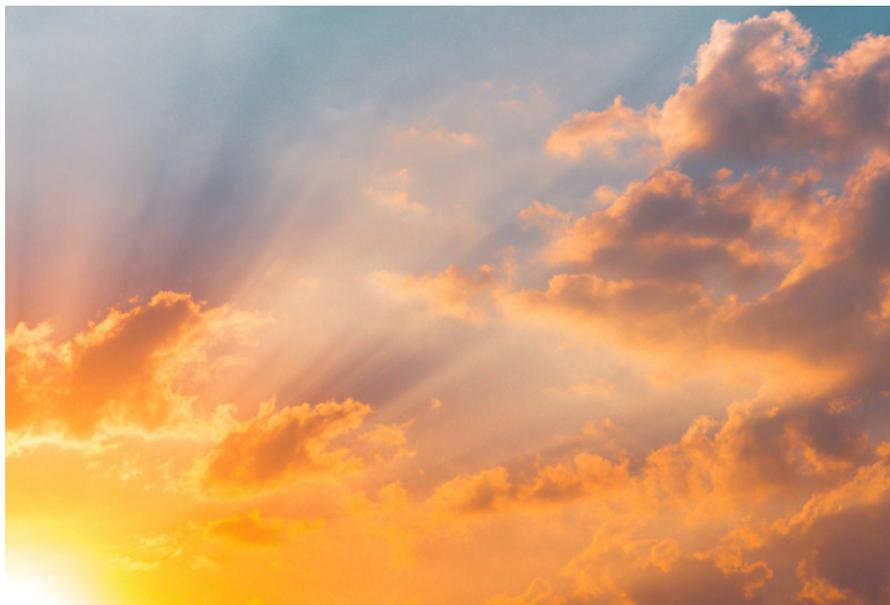
'Everything is Going to be All Right' by Derek Mahon

How should I not be glad to contemplate
The clouds clearing beyond the dormer window
And a high tide reflected on the ceiling?
There will be dying, there will be dying,
But there is no need to go into that.
The poems flow from the hand unbidden
And the hidden source is the watchful heart.
The sun rises in spite of everything
And the far cities are beautiful and bright.
I lie here in a riot of sunlight
Watching the day break and the clouds flying.
Everything is going to be all right.

Of course we are in the middle of a pandemic and we must be informed and take all precautions to protect ourselves and others but for every story of heartbreak, there are hundreds that make us smile and we need more of these to keep us positive. Everyday I witness acts of generosity and love.

We need to share these stories and give thanks for good neighbours, helpful strangers and dedicated workers as we did in the Spring.

When the Mothers' Union magazine 'Families First' drops through my letter box my heart lifts. I settle down to read it knowing that I will read



inspirational articles dealing with such things as, Mothers' Union (MU) work in prisons, MU support in local hospitals, the MU initiative to end modern day slavery, the MU 'Passionate about Parenting' Programme or the holidays offered by MU for key workers.

I return to the magazine several times over the next few days and feel privileged and comforted to belong to an organisation that continues to do so much good.

At our St John's Branch, we have two members celebrating their 90th birthdays and although the cake sharing must wait until we are able to meet up again, we give thanks to God for their long lives and for all the blessings he has bestowed upon them.

There is so much to mourn but also so much to be happy about, so I keep praying and giving thanks and look forward to brighter days ahead.

We wait in hope for the Lord,
 He is our help and shield,
 In him our hearts rejoice,
 For we must trust in his holy name.
 May your unfailing love be with us Lord,
 Even as we put our hope in you. Psalm 33

Carol Cooke, Branch Leader

“I’M DREAMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS”

The St John’s Eco Church group have put together some ideas for making Christmas a bit more sustainable. UK households get through staggering amounts of food, gifts, cards and wrapping paper at Christmas, and this in turn produces huge amounts of waste. The slogan ‘reduce – reuse – recycle’ can be helpful in trying to control this. Is that extra food necessary? Will that gift really be used? If you are given gifts you don’t want, can you pass them on to someone else, or to a charity shop? Some things are really hard to recycle, and recycling can be confusing, so here are a few simple suggestions which can help:

Cards and wrapping paper with glitter, foil or shiny finishes are impossible to recycle. To check if wrapping paper is recyclable, try the scrunch test: if it will scrunch up and stay in a ball, it can be recycled. But if it won’t stay as a ball, it contains plastic, and has to go in the general rubbish bin for landfill. Before recycling, remove any sticky tape and decorations such as ribbons and bows as these cannot be recycled.

Buy recycled Christmas cards or look for the FSC mark to guarantee they have been produced sustainably. Brown paper is greener than conventional wrapping paper and can look good on your presents. Maybe reuse brown paper that comes wrapped around a parcel and decorate it yourself, to give a really individual effect.

Save and re-use wrapping paper for next year. Alternatively, use a scarf to wrap that special present and cut up old cards to make gift tags – this really is ‘reduce – reuse – recycle’ in action.

Try using gardening string instead of sticky tape – exciting to unwrap and can then be re-used in the garden for tying up plants.

Presents: home-made presents are always special – cakes, biscuits, jams, sweets, plants in pots, crafts, especially made by children. Consider asking for vouchers to support local businesses, especially if they are still struggling due to Coronavirus restrictions. Cafes, restaurants, craft shops, book shops, salons, cinemas, arts venues... they will really value the support.

Food: waste is a huge problem. It’s so easy to over-cater at Christmas. Plan to transform left-overs into new meals. Freeze what you can’t eat. And put what is still left into the food recycling bin. Try to buy local, seasonal or Fairtrade food where possible.

Christmas trees: Did you know it’s possible to rent a Christmas tree? It goes back afterwards and is replanted in the ground. If buying a real tree, the most important thing is to make sure it’s recycled afterwards. Or go alternative and use a large branch of holly, or a large perennial indoor plant like a yucca or palm. If you



have a fake tree already then keep using it as long as possible. It has been calculated that an artificial tree would need to be reused for 10 Christmases to keep its environmental impact on a par with having a real tree that is recycled every year.

Almost everything we buy has a carbon footprint and much of it is packaged in un-recyclable plastic. Put simply – by buying less we can reduce the rate at

which natural resources are used up and the earth is polluted.

Let's rejoice and take delight in God's free gift to us – God incarnate, a baby born in a manger. Happy Christmas.

*Margaret Charlston and the
St John's Eco Church team.*



CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 10 - 16 MAY 2020



Christian Aid Week this year was like no other, but it was not cancelled!

Pre-pandemic, the focus was to be climate justice featuring the desperate plight of poor farmers in rural Kenya suffering from severe drought. Then the coronavirus arrived. The emphasis switched to the Coronavirus Emergency Appeal, since the world's poorest communities have the weakest health systems and the most vulnerable struggle to cope with the costs of health care and loss of income when they fall ill.

Christian Aid (CA) also asked us to support their call for the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer to help broker debt relief for the world's poorest countries so that they can concentrate available resources on tackling the pandemic. Subsequently, the G20 agreed to "pause" \$12 billion worth of debt repayments.

Here at St John's our online service on 10th May had a Christian Aid focus and we were encouraged to support the special Coronavirus Appeal as well as sign the petition. Despite the cancellation of all the usual fund-raising activities, not least the House-to-House collections, nationally Christian Aid Week raised £4m as well as £1.3m from the Coronavirus Appeal.

Nevertheless, the climate crisis has not gone away and the urgent need for justice has been reinforced this year by Black Lives Matter. In the UK we are becoming increasingly aware of the changes in our weather patterns, but in so many poor countries supported by Christian Aid the climate crisis has arrived and is undoing years of progress in tackling poverty. So, the **Autumn Appeal** is highlighting farming communities in Nicaragua struggling to grow coffee because the beans now suffer from pests and diseases and are scorched by the relentless sun. They naturally fear for their children's future, so CA is bringing communities together to share tools and knowledge.

If you would like to support this Appeal, you can donate online via christianaid.org.uk

Thank you very much for all your support during this difficult time.

Pat Hudis

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Harpenden Brownies and Rainbows

What a six months we have had! Our last 'normal' meeting in the church hall was on 12th March and since then we have been keeping in contact with our girls via email and Zoom.



On 17th September we had our first outdoor meeting on the common for the Brownies with the Rainbows following a week later. It was so good to see all the girls again – you may have spotted us having fun. Girlguiding UK and The National Youth Agency gave permission for youth activities to have groups of 15 girls at a meeting, so the Brownies had to divide into two groups. You wouldn't believe the amount of paperwork we had to complete in order to do this, but it was so worth it.

Now we are all hoping to be back indoors with full units as soon as it is safe and possible to do so.

For more information on Brownies and Rainbows in Harpenden, head to our website at: <http://girlguidingharpendingcentral.btck.co.uk>

Snowy and Dolphin

Stamps

British, foreign, used and unused

Thank you very much to all who bring stamps to the stamp box in the St John's church porch.

Twenty-five years ago I was in the Holy Land and visited a school for blind children. I was very sad at the lack of equipment, toys etc, and wondered how I could help. Since then I have collected stamps – even my brother collects them in Cornwall – and I take them to Amersham where they are expertly sorted and dealt with to get money which goes straight to helping these children.

Maybe you have an old stamp album somewhere in the house that you would like to give for this excellent request.

Many thanks for all your help.

Moirra Carrington



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Christmas Trivia Quiz - around the world

Answers

1. Caracas, Venezuela
2. Japan, after a successful marketing campaign began in 1974
3. North America
4. Germany
5. Sweden
6. He was from Patara which is in modern day Turkey
7. Norway
8. Indian Ocean
9. Panettone
10. The Netherlands
11. Provence
12. Naples
13. The Gävle Goat, Sweden
14. Brooms
15. Poland
16. Baby Jesus
17. Mexico
18. Ukraine
19. The Yule Cat
20. Italy.
21. Germany
22. Finland
23. San Fernando, The Philippines
24. South Africa



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Services at St John's

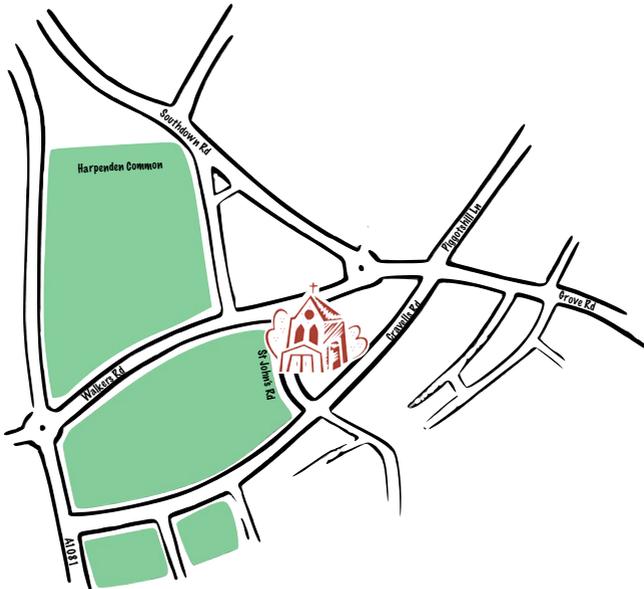
Monday - Friday:

8.30 am Morning Prayer [via Zoom](#).

Sunday:

9.30 am Service live-streamed [on our YouTube channel](#)

The church building is open for private prayer every day of the week, from 9am - 5pm.



PARISH OFFICE

For enquiries, including marriages, baptisms, funerals and hall bookings, please contact the parish office open from Monday 9am to 5:30pm and Wednesday to Friday 9:30am to 1:30pm.

Julie Birkett

Telephone: 01582 712776
parish.office@
stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

If you are in need of help or know anyone in need of support, please contact support@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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